

Topic Group— How to Grow/Jobs?

October 11, 2000

Citizens attending the topic group meeting believed more jobs were needed in Clark County. They believed the jobs need to be in a wide range of fields and at all wage levels, not just minimum wage level. Locating jobs in areas that are good for the community was an important issue. They also discussed how to attract employers into Clark County. Notes from the discussion follow.

Attendees:

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What can local government do to attract businesses?

- Create local tax incentive
- Develop flexible zoning strategies that are balanced by long-term plans for development
- Zone areas as to support mass transit systems
- Don't build industry in rural or largely suburban areas; this leads to more car miles and makes alternative transit more difficult
- Locate educational facilities near jobs and develop training programs while students acquire degrees
- In order to attract more jobs in the future, we should set aside land (up to 20,000 acres) for potential commercial development
- Zoning that is consistent and predictable gives private and corporate property owner's long-term stability
- The City of Portland's decision to create an industrial center in the Rivergate District, rather than a high end residential area, was an investment in long-term employment and economic development
- Streamline paper work processes
- Government can pay, but in many cases not waive local fees; we have to recognize the limitations of local agencies

How is the tax structure in the region related to job development?

- Oregon has a large business tax, Clark County should be more competitive
- Clark County's contribution to Oregon taxes weakens their ability to provide adequate funds for education, healthcare, and infrastructure development
- Vancouver offered tax incentives and some Portland businesses relocated, but after the incentive ended they moved back to Portland
- Oregon attracts Clark County consumers avoiding the sales tax, which hurts local businesses and decreases employment opportunities

- Washington businesses are often competitive price wise even with sales tax, but people continue to drive for “better deals in Portland”
- We need to educate and encourage Clark County residents to support local businesses.

What makes Clark County unique and competitive in terms of attracting jobs?

- No income tax
- Close to the ocean and Mountains (good recreational access)
- Close to a big city and cultural center
- Lower personal income taxes
- Strong environmental culture

What type of jobs do we want to attract?

- Family wage jobs (one person’s salary can support a family of three)
- Professional jobs
- Jobs that are not resource depleting
- Technology related jobs

Key Points

- Attract a range of jobs that require different levels of skill and education
- Support the development of clean industrial jobs
- Foster collaboration between government, schools, and business
- Infrastructure investments attract employers
- Employment centers and residential areas support small business, focus more energy on attracting large operations
- Improve the direction of the Columbia River Economic Development Council so that Clark County markets itself better